

The Digital EDGE



Parents, you don't have to ban screen time entirely. Here are five creative ways to use tech tools to actively engage your child.

GET PHYSICAL

You planned to let Junior loose outdoors, but it suddenly starts pouring or the PSI reading has gone up. In times like this, consider using motion-gaming systems to help your child expend energy indoors. From sports to dance to obstacle courses, motion-control games will encourage your child to get up and get moving, as he or she has to use the entire body as the game controller. The multi-player function enables other family members to join in too — perfect for bonding time! Such games will also enhance your child's motor and coordination skills.

H-HAPPY WAYS TO LEARN

The next time Junior asks for your smartphone, do not allow access to 'passive' entertainment and games as these do not encourage a child to 'think'. Instead, turn on fun educational apps that will help to develop your child's cognitive abilities and reinforce what has been taught in the classroom. Examples are games where the child has to match pairs of tiles (these games train the memory), count objects, or trace letters of the alphabet.



VIRTUAL TIMERS

A timer is an essential parenting tool most often used for a time-out when a child is being disciplined. It can also be used to set limits on, say, screen time, as well as assist in transitions between activities. Virtual timers, designed with cute graphics and sound effects, have become popular among parents who want to teach their children the concept of time. For example, saying 'five more minutes to bath time' to a two-year-old may mean nothing to the child. What a virtual timer does is that it clearly shows on the device how the 'five minutes' is slowly trickling away. With such a visual aid, the child is more willing to cooperate and to stop the current activity when told 'time is up'.

LET'S BAKE!

When your child and you bake or cook together, he is actually putting science, math and time-telling skills to use. Such activities also boost your child's confidence as they provide a sense of accomplishment and achievement. If you are not much of a baker, but would still like to make healthy treats together with Junior, turn to the Internet for help. Watching online baking videos will help your child to visualise what the batter should look like at each stage of the baking process or how the dough



should be moulded. And for more complicated techniques, like whipping egg whites, it helps when children and adults can imitate what they see.

READ AND WRITE

Digital books are popular among children because the stories are enhanced, thanks to interactive elements like sound effects and animation. Beautiful illustrations can draw your child into the story while narration helps to improve language and pronunciation.

To encourage higher-level thinking, you can help your child create his or her own stories and put together a digital storybook. There are a number of websites built for this purpose. Some have a library of illustrations so all you need to do is to have your child put words to the picture. Other websites encourage users to draw their own pictures and add words to tell the story.

For other tips and advice on family and parenting, you can visit Families for Life at www.familiesforlife.sg.

